

Cabinet were impressed by his ardent support of the Staff's estimate and advice.

At this time no rumours had reached us of serious trouble in the French Army. Its worst developments came later. Had he known what the exact condition of the French Army was at this date, I am convinced that General Smuts would have hesitated to throw over Petain's sagacious counsel.

Both the Smuts and Robertson documents were circulated to the Cabinet and were considered at the meeting of 1st May. In the course of the *Views of the discussion*, the Chief of the Imperial War Cabinet General Staff read a letter from Sir

Douglas Haig, in which he pointed out that at the moment some doubt existed as to who was the *de facto* Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, since General Nivelle was still the titular Commander-in-Chief, while General Petain had been appointed as Chief of the Staff at the French Ministry of War. However this might be, the Field-Marshal had little doubt that the French Government was in control, and that their policy was defensive in character. He considered it would be useless for him to continue to press his present offensive vigorously if the French did not co-operate actively, and he proposed a modification in his plans to meet this situation.

The questions raised for decision at the War

Cabinet were as follows :—

i. Should the British representatives at the forthcoming Anglo-French Conference press the French Government to pursue the policy of an active offensive ?

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